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*Keywords in  
Paraphrasing*

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**K**eywords are words that carry the main meaning of a sentence or phrase. They contain important information and cannot be lifted directly from the text, unless under special circumstances.

### Example (Original Text)

People have overthrown tyrannical regimes.

The verb ‘overthrown’ shows what has happened to such regimes, the new information that the author wishes to convey. The adjective ‘tyrannical’ defines the type of regimes that have been overthrown. It is newsworthy or significant as the author wishes to convey that tyrants are difficult to overthrow: tyrannical regimes are usually characterised by the use of force or suppression and the ruling by fear.

### In what circumstances is the lifting of keywords acceptable?

#### Generic or general words (e.g. people, regimes)

The word ‘people’ is considered a generic or general word. We are not expected to replace ‘people’ with ‘homo sapiens’. Nor do we expect other species to overthrow tyrants; animals clearly cannot overthrow tyrants, so it must be people. Similarly, the word ‘regime’ is also a generic or general word as the focus of the sentence is what has happened and who has been overthrown.

#### When does ‘people’ become a keyword?

This happens when the author’s intention is to highlight or emphasise the power of ordinary citizens in bringing down authoritarian regimes – that of a people’s revolution, and to highlight the point that if ordinary citizens joined hands, they could be a force to be reckoned with, as was seen in the Arab Spring. Whether the word ‘people’ is a keyword depends on the context of the whole passage.

Technique	Paraphrased Version
<i>Syntactic + Semantic paraphrasing</i>	Despotic / Authoritarian / Dictatorial rulers/leaders/regimes // Despots have been brought down / ousted / topped.
<i>Syntactic paraphrasing + Explanation</i>	Despotic / Authoritarian / Dictatorial rulers /regimes // Despots have been forced to abdicate / are no longer in power / have been forced from power.
<i>Semantic paraphrasing + Explanation</i>	People / The masses have toppled / ousted / forced despots to step down.

## The ‘humans’, ‘humankind’, ‘human beings’, ‘humanity’, etc. problem

We are not expected to replace ‘people’ with these terms. They are only appropriate if used to refer to all human beings on this planet or to separate people from animals. Thus, these words can only be used for general reference, often in scientific contexts, such as environmental essays.

### Key terms/concepts/topics

Topic	Original Text	Paraphrased Version
What can cause illnesses?	Uncontrolled stress responses can cause illness.	Unrestrained reactions to pressure can lead to illness. / Illnesses can be a result of...
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<p>Here, the word ‘illnesses’ and even the verbs ‘can cause’ can be lifted as they are in the topic themselves. Also, the keywords that answer the question are those that have to do with causes, such as ‘uncontrolled’, ‘stress’ and ‘responses’, which cannot be lifted. Note that the word ‘uncontrolled’ is important because if we can control our stress properly, then it may not lead to illnesses. The word ‘responses’ is also a keyword as it is our responses to stress that can determine whether we allow it to harm us. If we react to stress positively, it can even be a motivational force.</p>		
What is one negative consequence of stress?	Stress can affect the health of people as it affects their mind.	Stress can have a detrimental effect on the well-being of people as it exerts a psychological impact on them // affects their mental condition. // Stress can have a detrimental effect on the mental health of people. (Alternatively, we can combine the health and the mind together to prevent long-windedness and repetition.)

**Conventional words** (e.g. passport, pension, house, annual holiday, residential area, processed foods); **specialised/technical words or jargon** (e.g. barrister, plea bargain, lex talionis, surety bond [law]; asset, business plan [business studies]; director, proscenium arch [theatre studies]; Resveratrol, Cobalamin, Thiamine, Riboflavin, ammonium sulphate [scientific terms]); **common or proper nouns** (e.g. John, lion, table, zoo, Earth, Sun, Moon); **concept words** (e.g. Education, Science, Technology). However, if they are meant to function as examples, then the summation technique is required to extract the main point. Alternatively, we can use a super ordinate category to sum up the main point.

Original Text	Paraphrased Version
Cobalamin, thiamine and riboflavin are essential for the health of pregnant women.	The group B vitamins are vital/necessary for the well-being of expectant mothers.
This is my first visit to the zoo. I had never seen so many kinds of animals before. I saw lions, racoons, and even komodo dragons and red pandas.	This is my maiden visit to the zoo and I am so excited to witness so many species of creatures, including rare ones.
The accepted tradition whereby junior doctors in hospitals may spend up to twelve hours a day on duty during a working week needs to be reconsidered as a matter of urgency.	We should question as a matter of priority the established practice of young physicians/junior doctors working eighty-hour weeks in medical facilities/hospitals.
Small and medium enterprises can fail because they simply lack cash when it matters.	A shortage of cash / available money at a critical time can undermine successful medium-sized companies / small and medium enterprises.

**[YOUR TURN 1]** *Identify conventional and specialised words in the following sentences and try paraphrasing them (if possible).*

- 1 High-speed trains are a prerequisite for a thriving modern economy.
- 2 The Asian tiger is under threat as a trophy for hunters on safari; as a source of parts for traditional medicine; and for its skin.
- 3 The share price dropped to an all-time low in January but bounced back at the end of the financial year.
- 4 Reaching agreement over copyright issues the single most pressing issue that the music industry faces.
- 5 If they accomplish nothing else, water metres remind the consumer that this precious liquid is, ultimately, a limited resource.
- 6 Acting as a school governor allows a member the public to put their specific expertise at the service of their local school.

**[YOUR TURN 2]** *Which of these sentences is appropriate, and which are not?*

- 1 Human beings have stood on the moon.
- 2 Human beings want to become rich.
- 3 Humanity generally lives with unfulfilled hopes.
- 4 Humanity is basically good.
- 5 Humankind needs to protect the environment.
- 6 Humankind no longer lives in caves, having evolved advanced societies.
- 7 Humankind works mostly during the day.
- 8 Humans drive cars.
- 9 Humans like chocolate.
- 10 In America, humanity generally earns high salaries.
- 11 Some animals present a danger to human beings.
- 12 This will make a better world for humankind.